



PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning & Development Services Department • 201 N. Stone Ave. • Tucson, AZ 85701

DATE: September 12, 2018

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Scott Clark
Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* Amendment PA-18-04, Amendment to Allow for Adaptive Re-use of the Benedictine Monastery, Located on Eastside of Country Club Road between 2nd and 3rd Streets
Study Session (Ward 6)

Issue – This is a study session on a plan amendment request submitted by Corky Poster of Poster Frost Mirto on behalf of Mr. Ross Rulney, Tucson Monastery LLC to amend both the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* and the *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan*. The applicant is proposing an adaptive re-use of the former Benedictine Monastery site with potential retail/commercial, office, and residential uses; and new construction of a high-density, multi-family residential complex with a maximum building height of 55-feet. The amendment site is approximately 7.58 acres and includes an adjacent property immediately to the north of the Monastery site which is currently zoned O-3, approximately 31, 363 square foot site, and currently housing a dilapidated structure.

The Conceptual Land Use map for both the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* and the *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* only allows office/high density residential along the western portion of the site, and low density residential along the eastern portion of the site. The amendment site has split zoning, with the western portion of the site zoned O-3, allowing office and high-density residential with a maximum building height of 40-feet; the eastern portion of the site is zoned R-3, allowing high-density residential and a maximum height of 40-feet.

The amendment site requires a rezoning to allow for the proposed land uses and building height. A rezoning must be in conformance with adopted plan policies before a rezoning application may be accepted for processing. Because the project proposal is not in conformance with the land uses identified in the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* and *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan*, amendments to both plans are required.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission set this item for public hearing on the next available date in October 2018.

Applicant's Request: The proposed amendment request has evolved since the initial submittal. The initial request had a proposed maximum building height of 66-feet on the north and south, with 45-feet along Anderson and Country Club, and proposed approximately 222 residential units. The second revision had language that proposed to develop the project with

no maximum building height restrictions, rather allowing heights to exceed 40-feet, but with step downs towards Country Club Road, and limited residential units to 250.

The third revision, and the one before the Planning Commission requests amending the Conceptual Land Use Maps in both the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* and *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* to allow Commercial-Neighborhood Level, and/or Office, and/or High Density Residential uses.

The amendment request also proposes adding a policy section with strategy language to the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan*, Goal #2: Neighborhood Preservation and Rehabilitation section that specifically calls out for the preservation and reuse of the Benedictine Monastery site, including a set of strategies that requires preservation of the Monastery buildings through a historic landmark designation or other preservation mechanism; limits maximum building height to 55-feet, with step downs towards Country Club Road; limits residential density to a maximum 250 new construction units; and restricts commercial uses to neighborhood-level commercial. Note that the Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan defines neighborhood-level commercial uses as those uses intended primarily to serve a local neighborhood market, for example, those uses allowed with City C-1 zone.

The *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* amendment request includes policy direction that architectural style of new development shall be compatible with the Monastery and the overall design character of the neighborhoods. It proposes that an advisory committee with neighborhood representation shall be formed through the PAD process.

If the plan amendment is successful, then the applicant intends to seek a Planned Area Development (PAD) rezoning for the subject property.

Background: The Benedictine Convent and Perpetual Adoration Shrine of Christ the King was constructed in 1939 and 1940. The building was designed by architect Roy O. Place. It conforms to an “E” shaped plan with the chapel forming the top (north) leg of the “E” and residential portions of the convent contained in the remainder of the building. The building was constructed in a Spanish Revival style with a stone façade featuring Eucharistic symbolism on the form of the chapel.

The Benedictine property building is listed on the National Register in 1994, as a contributor to the Sam Hughes Historic District. The District is significant for its architecture. Although the Benedictine property is located outside of the District boundaries, which is very unusual for a contributor to a district, it was considered significant to the neighborhood. Per the City’s Historic Preservation Office, the National Register status of the building has been confirmed by the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and memorialized in a framed certificate on display inside the Monastery building. The building’s landscaping generally contributed to its integrity, but no formal documentation has been prepared on landscape elements.

The heights of the building roof and cupola were not recorded when the property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor have heights been confirmed through field inspection by the City of Tucson. There is a possibility that original drawings may have specified the height. The applicant has indicated in their application packet that the top of the turquoise cupola of the chapel tower is approximately 86-feet to the bottom of the cross, and to the top of the east-west roof ridge of the Chapel is approximately 46-feet.

Existing Zoning and Land Uses: The 7.58 acre amendment site is zoned O-3 and R-3.

To the west, across Country Club Road, is the Sam Hughes neighborhood, a National Register District, zoned R-1, consisting primarily of single-story family residences.

To the east is the Miramonte neighborhood, a City registered Neighborhood Association, with R-2 and R-3 zoning immediately adjacent and R-1 zoning further into the neighborhood, with a mix of apartments, one- and two-story single family residences.

To the north and south of the amendment site is O-3 and R-3 zoning with existing land uses including a mix of office and multi-family residential uses. Further north, approximately 450 feet from the amendment site, is C-1 zoning with commercial/retail uses.

The Major Streets and Route Plan map identifies Country Club Road as an arterial roadway with a proposed 100-foot right-of-way. The existing right-of-way adjacent to the amendment site and north of Third Street is 70-feet.

Land Use Policy Direction: Policy direction is provided by the *Plan Tucson, the City of Tucson' General & Sustainability Plan* (2013), the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* (2008), and, the *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* (1985). Key policies are summarized below; a complete policy listing is provided as Attachment I.

Plan Tucson (2013): *Plan Tucson* supports maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods, while accommodating some new development and redevelopment and encouraging reinvestment and new services and amenities that contribute further to neighborhood stability. It supports adaptive reuse of historic landmarks and the preservation of Tucson's historic architecture. *Plan Tucson* supports high density residential and commercial development along arterials. It supports infill and redevelopment projects that reflect sensitivity to site and neighborhood conditions and adheres to relevant site and architectural design guidelines.

Miramonte Neighborhood Plan (2008): The *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* (MNP), Conceptual Land Use map identifies the amendment site for office and high density residential uses in the western portion of the site, and low density residential uses in the eastern portion. The MNP calls for preserving the character of the neighborhood by ensuring that future land uses make a positive contribution to the neighborhood through such elements as an increase in home ownership in both low and high density development; a diverse mix of

land uses that contribute to the traditional character of the neighborhood; carefully designed transitions between land uses; functional open space in all residential zones; green and sustainable development; and the use of native and/or drought tolerant plant materials.

The *MNP* supports the preservation and economic sustainability of the Benedictine Monastery as an important historic site, including preservation of the landscape buffering. The *MNP* calls for creating transitions between residential and commercial areas. It encourages that high density housing step down heights and densities to the property edge and extensive use of landscape plant materials and screening to buffer the edges of higher density residential development.

Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan (1985): The *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan (ABAP)* general goals are to identify appropriate locations for new development, and to protect and preserve the integrity of established residential, low-density neighborhoods. The *ABAP* identifies allowable land uses for the amendment site as office/high density residential in the western portion of the site, and low density residential uses in the eastern portion of the site. It states that high density residential uses are generally appropriate along arterial streets, with residential development that is sensitively designed to enhance existing lands uses by compatibility of scale, density, and character with existing development. Nonresidential uses are intended to be at locations that are most suited to handle the intensity of such uses in terms of traffic generation and other potential impacts on adjacent residential uses. Nonresidential uses should be along arterials, with all parking met onsite. Screening and buffering for adjacent residential uses must be provided on-site. The *ABAP* suggests providing setbacks and a transition of heights and/or densities for proposed development which is adjacent to less intense uses, unless other mitigation measures provide adequate buffering. It calls for a transition of building heights downward from the arterial street frontage along Country Club Road towards adjacent residential uses to be compatible with adjacent buildings. The *ABAP* calls for minimizing traffic impacts of Country Club Road on surrounding neighborhoods and encouraging the enhancement of the visual streetscape along Country Club Road.

Public Contact: The applicant held the required neighborhood meeting on June 28, 2018 at the Benedictine Monastery Chapel. There were approximately 92 attendees at the meeting. Questions raised included parking, sustainability, group dwelling and student housing, and preservation of the Benedictine Monastery. Additionally, some attendees raised concern about the scale and heights of the proposed new construction. Some thought there should be no height limitations rather the building design should be addressed through the rezoning process. Others supported revised height restrictions, while still others were opposed to any increase in density and height. There were also issues raised about possible increase in traffic on Country Club, and possible conflict with bicyclists, with one resident suggesting that there be entrances to the site other than Country Club Road.

Staff has received an email/letter from a neighbor in opposition to the amendment language being proposed regarding structure of the amendment as well as content.

Staff also received a letter from the Miramonte Neighborhood Association requesting modifications to the amendment language, with specific height recommendations. (See Attachment J).

Discussion: The Benedictine Monastery is a significant architectural and historic landmark not only for the City of Tucson, but for both the Sam Hughes and Miramonte neighborhoods. The *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* specifically calls for the development of a long-range plan for preservation and economic sustainability of the Benedictine Monastery as an important historic site. After the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration exhausted all avenues for selling the monastery site to a religious user, they finally sold the property to the applicant who has a plan for adaptive re-use of the Benedictine Monastery site. The Sisters sold the site “not having any illusions that the extensive open spaces would be preserved in a ‘park-like’ atmosphere under his use. We understood that anyone who paid market cost for the 6+ acre property plus the cost for planning renovations, basic modernization [sorely needed], and required Code upgrades to the interior [not required of us; our occupancy pre-dated modern Codes], would need to generate significant income using the vacant three acres” (See Attachment D – Application, Neighborhood Meeting Packet, a letter from the Benedictine Sisters).

The first step in the applicant’s long-range plan for preservation and economic sustainability of the Benedictine Monastery is to seek an amendment to both the *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* and the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* to allow commercial/retail and high density residential, including an increase in allowable building height of 55-feet while preserving the Monastery building. This would allow infill development on the site around the Monastery as well as adaptive re-use of the Monastery building.

The plan amendment process is an opportunity for the city as a whole and neighborhoods to decide how the city and neighborhoods will develop and grow in the future. The plan amendment process focuses on future land use patterns, zoning, transportation and community life issues. The outcome of the process is intended to provide neighbors and any future developers a greater degree of certainty regarding a particular area or site whether a current proposal is built or if the proposed project goes away.

The rezoning process which is generally pursued if a plan amendment is approved, sets development standards for a site such as building elevation and materials, setbacks, landscaping and screening. However, the plan amendment provides parameters for future land development, such as the adaptive re-use of a historic site which can require more specific policy direction be addressed in the plan amendment. However, such direction should be broad enough to allow design flexibility during the rezoning process, i.e. for historic preservation, building heights, density, setbacks, and design. Still any height restrictions or densities should be broad enough to allow for design flexibility during the rezoning process.

The proposed amendment is supported by *Plan Tucson* and the *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan*, both of which call for adaptive reuse of historic landmarks and the preservation of

Tucson's historic architecture. The proposed plan amendment will require any future rezoning to preserve the Monastery building through the City's Historic Landmark designation or other preservation mechanism. The proposed amendment restricts maximum building height for any new construction to 55-feet. The amendment language also calls for step downs towards Country Club Road, with architectural style for new development being compatible with the Monastery and overall design character of the neighborhood. Both the *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* and *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan* suggest transition of building heights downward from the arterial street frontage toward adjacent residential uses. It calls out that an advisory committee with neighborhood representation be formed through the PAD process. The amendment limits the total number of new construction residential units to 250. The amendment proposes appropriate adaptive re-use opportunities for the Monastery building and site, including neighborhood-level commercial, office or high density residential. The *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan* defines neighborhood-level commercial as commercial uses intended primarily to serve a local neighborhood market, for example those uses allowed in the City's C-1 zone.

The PAD rezoning would allow for a further refinement of appropriate and compatible land uses by prohibiting incompatible uses such as group dwelling which is used for student housing projects. The PAD rezoning can address architectural guidelines and design review, including establishing a design review committee that includes architects and adjacent neighborhood representative (s). It can also address minimizing traffic impact on surrounding neighborhoods and enhancing the visual streetscape along Country Club Road. During the PAD rezoning process and development package review a traffic statement and/or a traffic impact analysis is provided to address transportation issues such as redirecting traffic from high intensity uses onto major streets, number of access points for the project and any required traffic mitigation or infrastructure improvements.

Conclusion: Staff recommends the Planning Commission set this item for public hearing in October 2018. Staff will continue to review this proposal relative to existing and planned land uses, as well as other relevant information.

Attachments:

- A: Context Map
- B: Zoning Map
- C: Land Use Map
- D: Plan Amendment Application
- E: Existing *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan*
- F: Proposed Change to *Alvernon-Broadway Area Plan*
- G: Existing *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan*
- H: Proposed Change to *Miramonte Neighborhood Plan*
- I: Land Use Plan Policies
- J: Public Contact